

**AN EVALUATION OF USAID/OTI'S
WOMEN IN TRANSITION INITIATIVE
IN RWANDA**



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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Overview:

The United States Government, recognizing the disproportionate number of Rwandan women in the post genocide period, sought ways to assist them in the peaceful reconstruction of their society. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau of Humanitarian Response (BHR), Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) working with the USAID Mission in Rwanda conceived and designed a program for women's empowerment and participation in local decision making. The purpose of the program was to assist women and other vulnerable groups to rebuild their lives, their families and their communities. By meeting basic needs, it was felt that women could contribute to reduction in social tensions and foster peace, at the same time the program would create opportunities for women's political participation.

Evaluation Findings:

Impact of WIT

WIT has made an important contribution to the rebuilding of women's lives in Rwanda. From June 1996 to May 1999, WIT has worked in 86 communes, funded 1,460 projects, reached 29,254 association members, providing assistance to a total of more than 160,000 beneficiaries. All this has been accomplished with modest funding – approximately \$3 million, and low administrative costs – more than 75% of funds allocated to WIT have gone to project activities.

- WIT has been effective in meeting the needs of poor and vulnerable strata of the population: WIT staff went to the rural areas and began working directly with women's associations. The focus was on small livestock, agricultural activities and micro enterprise.
- WIT activities have helped to reduce tensions in communities. Hunger, lack of housing and poverty were identified as the primary causes of social tension, and WIT has assisted women and the vulnerable to build homes, feed themselves, and begin to restart their lives economically.
- WIT has helped to build unity and create space for reconciliation. WIT, by bringing women together in associations, creates a place for communication, for interaction, for interdependence to develop. Many associations are mixed ethnically. The real problem exists between widows and wives of men in prison who have been accused of genocide. Even between these groups there are important examples of the rebuilding of unity and social trust, such as in Commune Runyinya, where, in a religious context, women are coming together in forgiveness.
- WIT has also contributed to the participation of women in new political structures. The Ministry created Women's Committees at the local level to assist WIT with project implementation and monitoring. WIT-funded projects were one element that provided women opportunities to participate in local decision making as part of these committees. Leaders of associations (including those funded by WIT) were elected to local councils in recent elections. The current structure for commune councils specifies that there will be at

least 4 elected women members (out of 10). There is anecdotal evidence that women are being elected to seats that are not reserved specifically for women representatives.

- Development of Women's Communal Funds (WCF) as a local, revolving fund to support economic growth is another important aspect of WIT's contribution to the empowerment of women in Rwanda. Here women borrow from the locally managed WCF, and pay back into the fund so then loans can be made to others.

Elements contributing to WIT's success

The unusual partnership between the GOR Ministry of Gender and USAID has been an important factor in the success of WIT. Ministry support at the commune level has ensured their ability to operate effectively; the USAID umbrella has enabled WIT to act independently and maintain its objectivity and the essential equipment and resources to carry the program to the most isolated rural areas of Rwanda. Its small size has contributed to its flexibility. The systems established which require women leaders to step out of traditional roles, travel long distances, and interact with officials has taught women and their communities that women are capable leaders. WIT's management structures have ensured the effective use of resources, and created an organization with the capacity to adapt to evolving situations.

Future Directions

If WIT continues in its current role, it is positioned to contribute to the achievement of two of USAID's three strategic objectives: SO1 (in the area of Local Government Initiatives), and SO3 (Household Food Security).

WIT needs to be tied more closely with USAID training and program planning, attending periodic meetings and planning sessions with the Democracy and Governance / local government and food security teams would facilitate this synergy. This would enhance WIT's long term planning capacity, and help to link the WIT program to USAID results.

WIT is most effective as a program that draws on both the Ministry and USAID, but remains essentially independent of both. This unique position has empowered WIT and enabled it to do more than it could have done in another form. WIT should be continued as a USAID grants program, in its current form.

Lessons Learned

- Activities that promote and increase women's economic empowerment can lead to political participation.
- Economic activities, particularly in groups and associations, contribute to the reduction of tension and the creation of unity in post-conflict settings.
- Activities that require women to assume non-traditional roles in one area help them to acquire the necessary confidence and self esteem to take on other non-traditional roles.

- When women are seen as leaders and individuals with the capacity to assist others to address their problems, they can be elected to positions that would otherwise be filled by men.
- Direct targeting of rural women's associations in post conflict settings is a viable addition to, but not a replacement for, targeting of national, urban-based NGOs.
- Urban based NGOs continue to play a role in directly addressing government on their level, on issues of women's legal rights, for example.
- Local control and management of resources through mechanisms like the Women's Communal Fund, managed by a rural Women's Committee, can be models for future transition and development programming.
- Working in a post-conflict or post-genocide setting requires flexibility and adaptability in programming. Many of OTI's current mechanisms should be used as a model by USAID itself, to better meet the needs of transition environments. To remain relevant, USAID needs to develop more flexible mechanisms for project implementation.
- One-time inputs to particularly vulnerable and impoverished groups may not be sufficient to launch them into a development phase. Groups with problems should be carefully studied, and follow-up assistance should be provided under certain conditions.

Conclusions

The Women in Transition Initiative is accomplishing its goals, and having an important impact on the lives of Rwandan women. It is helping women to restart their lives, the lives of their families and communities. It is making an important contribution to reducing social tension and building unity and trust in communities. The assistance to women in rural associations has provided a context for women to develop their leadership skills and demonstrate to themselves and to their communities that they can be community leaders and decision-makers. The results of recent local government elections where women association leaders were elected to public office attest to this development.

USAID/OTI grants to women's associations in Rwanda are the foundation for rebuilding local communities and social trust, and thus these grants are making a contribution to the peaceful reconstruction of Rwanda. WIT has been able to reach out into rural communities and offer hope for a better future for their children. But peace and reconciliation do not come easily or quickly to a war-torn, post-genocide society. This is a long term effort, and it is essential that WIT be continued in its present form in order to continue the development of a peaceful and participatory society develop in Rwanda.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

Rwanda was devastated by the 1994 civil war, genocide and killings. More than 800,000 people are estimated to have been killed during a few weeks of violence. Women were raped, close family members and friends lost, the social fabric torn apart and livelihoods and infrastructure destroyed. Following the war and genocide, USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) funded a study in early 1995 of possible relief and rehabilitation interventions. A significant aspect of OTI's review was the redefinition of the role of women in Rwandan society following the 1994 tragedy. The study revealed that the number of female-headed households rose sharply throughout the country. Consequently, a substantial number of women had to work outside their homes to support their families and it became evident they would most likely play an increasing role in the economic and decision-making processes in their post crisis communities and communes.

The Women in Transitions (WIT) initiative was developed and supported by OTI, USAID/Rwanda and the Rwandan Ministry of Family and Women Promotion.¹ OTI initiated the WIT activity, as a response to the Rwandan genocide, with initial funding of \$1 million for 1995 -1996. Additional funds were provided through USAID/Rwanda Assistance to Displaced Persons (ADDP), which injected \$769,000 in 1996, followed by further OTI grants in 1997, 1998, and 1999. ADP assistance also supplemented the account in 1999. To date, a total of \$5,247,995 has been provided by USAID to the WIT project.

The stated goal of the WIT project was to “strengthen women’s economic and political position so that they can rebuild their lives and promote a society built on tolerance and respect.” It proposed funding activities that promoted community mobilization, small enterprise development, cooperative enterprises, peace education, literacy, women’s empowerment and capacity building for structures that support women at the commune level. The beneficiaries were to be Rwandan women, particularly female heads of household or those caring for foster children. Women were also to benefit from sensitization and advocacy activities that supported women’s rights and their active participation in community decision making. The plan was to use a variety of implementing partners, including the Ministry of Women, and local and international NGOs.

2.1 Objectives of the Evaluation

This report is a formative evaluation of the Women in Transitions Initiative, and was conducted over a four-week period from May 10 to June 8, 1999 by a two-person external evaluation team. It consisted of the Democracy and Governance/ Humanitarian Assistance Advisor to the Office of Women in Development, who has worked extensively in transition settings, and a scholar and political scientist with 30 years experience working on Rwandan issues. This study combined an evaluation of the WIT project for OTI with an ongoing effort by the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) to study women in post-conflict societies.

¹ The original acronym for this ministry was Mifaprofe. However, the Ministry has changed names and acronyms several times, and has been called Migefaso and Migeprofe at various points. It will be referred to in this document by its current name, Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, or simply, as “the Ministry.”

The OTI evaluation had four main objectives: (1) To provide an assessment of the validity of targeting women in post conflict settings, beginning with a review of OTI's assumptions; (2) To provide information on the impact of the WIT program on the status of rural women participants; (3) To provide information on future activities identified by women which are necessary to achieve the next stage of development; and (4) To provide an analysis of the sustainability of economic activities and participatory decision-making between women's associations and government officials at the commune level.

The team spent almost four weeks visiting activities across Rwanda, conducting interviews with local government officials, association members, elected women leaders, project beneficiaries, local and international NGOs and donor agencies and ministry officials. Debriefs were held for WIT Staff, USAID Mission and Embassy personnel, and the Ministry, prior to departure.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology used in this evaluation consisted of a combination of individual interviews, large group meetings and focus group discussions of issues, supplemented with document reviews. Interviews were held with key local officials, large group meetings were organized with association members, and focus groups were conducted with women association leaders and locally elected women. Interview questionnaires can be found in the attached annex. Lastly, interviews with local and international NGOs and bi- and multi- lateral donors supplemented the information gathered.

In addition to qualitative information from informants, hard data in the form of WIT information on projects funded, types of activities undertaken, and follow-up actions taken by the WIT activity monitor, were available at the time of this study. This helped to provide a clear understanding of WIT's economic inputs and impact. This information, combined with observation of the WIT team in action, plus interviews and focus groups using open ended questions, provided a clear picture of the impact of the activities on women's economic status and its effect on reducing tensions and promoting unity and reconciliation.

The following report presents an assessment of the achievement of the WIT project's goals and objectives, as stated in project documents made available to the team. In the following pages the report outlines key findings on WIT's impact on economic activities, the rebuilding of social unity and the development of women's political participation. It examines the foundations for WIT's success, and assesses the impact of the activity and policy lessons that can be drawn from the WIT experience.

2.3 OTI Objectives for WIT

USAID/OTI conceived of the WIT program as a program for women's economic empowerment leading to participation in local community decision making, and as a means of promoting unity and reconciliation. A USAID Action Memorandum, dated August 23, 1995, identifies women as a "key variable" in the peaceful reconstruction of Rwandan society, and notes that women were beginning to change their attitudes towards work outside the household, with a spillover into other areas of community life. The Limited Scope Grant Agreement with the Government of Rwanda, signed September 28, 1995, states that the purpose of the WIT initiative was "to support women in rebuilding their lives, the lives of their families and the local community in a

peaceful and productive manner by providing funds to a variety of activities that support women's endeavors and priorities and increase tolerance and respect among all Rwandans."

Internal USAID documents, such as the exit report by the first project coordinator, October 24, 1996, identified strategies developed through a focus group of Ministry and WIT staff, over several weeks. Here the importance of the involvement of women in their local communities, and the emphasis on inclusiveness and transparency in decision-making were identified. It is noteworthy that WIT, from the beginning, identified the importance of increasing women's contacts and information, to help them become more self-confident and involved in their local communities.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS:

3.1. WIT Focus and Funding, 1996-1999

In the earliest phase of WIT programming, funding was provided to local NGOs, as well as directly to rural community women's associations. Grants were made to several local NGOs, including Duterimbere (women's banking), IWACU (a cooperative training institution), Hagaruka (legal rights of women on property and inheritance laws) and Umushumba Mwiza (Bon Pasteur), which works with young women at risk as well as former prostitutes to provide education and job training. These NGOs continue to do outstanding work. But the overall results of this early focus were somewhat mixed. One NGO of long standing noted that their ranks were decimated in the post-genocide period, which hampered their capacity to deliver programs.

WIT also proposed institutional support for the development of Women's NGOs and cooperatives, with training and institutional development for Ministry representatives at the prefecture level, to assist them in sensitizing and mobilizing women, developing and reviewing proposals and monitoring and assessing project outcomes. From 1995 to May 1, 1996, the WIT initiative disbursed sub-grants to women's NGO's and associations in 5 prefectures, including more than 100 grants to national women's NGOs, associations and groups.

WIT evolved to focus almost exclusively on rural women's associations. By October 1996, the WIT project determined that anecdotal evidence showed results of a "general strengthening in the involvement of local [women] actors in the process of dialogue and decision-making." From May 1996 to May 1999 WIT has worked in 86 rural communes, and funded 1460 projects. These projects have reached 29,254 association members, providing assistance to a total of more than 160,000 beneficiaries. This project has had modest funding – less than 3.5 million dollars. All this has been accomplished with very low administrative costs – with more than three-quarters of funds allocated to WIT project activities.

3.2 Meeting the needs of the poor and vulnerable

Poverty was identified as the primary source of jealousy and tension in focus groups across Rwanda. People without shelter were said to "hate" those who had houses. People going hungry "resent" neighbors who have food to eat. The Rwandan government, as well as the World Bank, estimates that 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, without adequate resources to meet their basic needs.

A demographic survey conducted by the government in 1996 estimated that 54% of the population was female, and that 34% of households were headed by women, which undoubtedly underestimated actual numbers, due to reluctance to report and subsequent mass returns of refugees. In the 34% of households headed by women, widows were found to head an average of 60% of the female-headed households, although regional figures varied considerably. In five of Rwanda's 12 prefectures the percentage of widows heading households was higher than 60%: Byumba (66.5%), Kibungo (65.7%), Butare (65%), Gisenyi (63.5%), Ruhengeri (62.9%) and Cyangugu (61%).

The poorest households in Rwanda experience regular food deficits. In 1995-1996 the government estimated that 10% of households needed food aid on a permanent basis, and an additional 2.2% needed food aid on a temporary basis. Such aggregate statistics, however, tend to mask important regional variations and differences among households within a given area. For example, in two prefectures, the percentage of undernourished women was more than 50% higher than the national average: Kibungo (23.3%) and Umutara (21%). The size of the food shortages faced by very poor households also varied significantly within a given prefecture. For example, in Butare the size of the food deficit for those who stayed through all of 1994 was 10-20%; but for those who had returned to the prefecture in March 1997 or after, the amount of the food deficit was 60-70%.

In Rwanda, the main reasons for poverty are inadequate land, lack of livestock and/or lack of labor. Poor, women headed households frequently lack housing and access to land. In Kibungo, prefectural figures on food production show a surplus. But data for households with only one active person working, and ¼ hectare or less of land, show an annual food deficit in 1997 of 30-40% without food assistance.

These statistics refer only to the most vulnerable households, which experience recurrent food deficits. But the problem of inadequate food is still broader. In the last half of 1996, 26% of households received food aid of some type and 30% were helped by food-for-work programs. If 70% of Rwanda's households live below the poverty line, then even households that are able to meet their minimum food needs may not be able to obtain food and other basic necessities such as salt, soap, and decent clothes. Health care and school fees are especially problematic.

Women participating in WIT funded associations, as well as WIT Staff and Migeprofe representatives at the local level, regularly commented on the improvement in women's self-esteem through WIT interventions. Women's economic situation had become so desperate that they lacked clothing, and therefore social pressure kept them out of public view. The beneficiaries noted that because of WIT's assistance, they were able to restart their lives, and they had financial resources to take care of their basic needs, including clothing. There is a Rwandan proverb that says, "*ntawe ugira ijambo yambaye injamba*" which means: "No one can speak publicly wearing torn clothes." In Rwandan society, lack of clothing is a sign of poverty, while an acceptable public image gives women the confidence and self-esteem to speak before groups, foreigners and government officials.

3.2.1 Agriculture and Livestock

WIT is providing assistance for survival. Activities offering livestock account for 7% of WIT funds, and 21% of WIT activities. Agricultural assistance in the form of seeds and

tools represents 2% of WIT funds, and 46% of their activities. Assistance to restart agriculture with seeds and tools, or small animals for manure to enhance soil fertility are fundamental to survival. WIT has provided \$246,108 in grants to 532 vulnerable associations, with 78,110 beneficiaries. For example:

Commune Kanama: 15 women's associations received funding for seeds, tools and agricultural inputs through the Women's Communal Fund. This assistance has literally moved women from less than one meal a day and "rags", to food security and decent clothing. In this most fertile region they were able to exceed expected productivity and plant multiple crops. They purchased clothing for themselves and their families, and are eating regularly. Besides potatoes, the women were also able to grow vegetables, and one association was able to purchase two tea plots that bring regular revenues. Proceeds enabled them to purchase additional farm tools, and meet other household needs, with enough left for seed.

Commune Tare: A woman organized this group of very vulnerable elderly, handicapped people and helped them obtain goats through WIT. Half the members received goats, and when the goats reproduced, the offspring were given to members without goats. These association members are too old and handicapped to walk kilometers to distant fields, so they survive by growing a few crops next to their houses. The goats have ensured soil fertility for their small gardens.

3.2.2 Shelter

WIT has provided funding for shelter, particularly for the vulnerable, that includes women-headed households, the elderly and handicapped. WIT provided tin roofing, wood framing, doors and windows, adobe and assistance with labor but no cement, kitchens or latrines. Shelter projects consumed 42% of total funds, but represents only 5% of WIT projects. Seventy-one women's associations with 11,568 beneficiaries have received housing grants, resulting in 100% occupancy rates for completed houses, with an average cost per house of \$800.

Funding for shelter was provided from 1996-1998. Due to diminishing funds and the termination of OTI's role, no more shelter projects are planned. Because of the different waves of returning refugees, the 1959 exiles have received shelter assistance, as have refugees returning in 1997 and 1998. However, in the North where there has been continuing insecurity and refugees from Congo (Kinshasa) are only now returning, no additional assistance with shelter is planned. This may present a risk to security in the area, and the situation should be carefully assessed. These women are associated with the ex-FAR and *interhamwe*, and finding ways to give them and their families a stake in a peaceful future for the region is essential. Recently, OTI, and the USAID Mission have focused on new communes and women's associations in Northwest Rwanda -- Gikongoro, Kibuye and Gisenyi -- which have received agricultural and livestock raising assistance.

Gisenyi Prefecture: Associations in the communes of Gisenyi report that the influx of Tutsi '59ers' moved into houses they found vacant when they returned to Rwanda. The government determined that the houses should be returned to their owners when they came back in 1996 and 1997. In this area many families shared housing for lack of an alternative -- a source of tension under any circumstances, but when different ethnic

groups are sharing the same house, it is a potentially explosive situation. WIT's assistance for shelter enabled returnees to build shelter and return homes to their owners. In one commune the land was shared, and people who had lived together continued to live in close proximity.

Commune Kayove: A large group meeting with local government officials in 1999 identified the problem of infiltrators, and requested that women turn in infiltrators in the area. The women also requested more troops on the border to protect them. The subsequent focus group with association and elected women leaders identified recent groups of refugees returning from the Congo who were without shelter or food. This group noted that recent returnees from the conflict in Congo included a large number of widows. These are clearly people caught between the *interhamwe* and the government, who now are anxious to return to their homes and security. But the unavailability of food and housing means that this group is vulnerable to pressures from anti-government forces, and this situation could lead to future insecurity in the region.

3.2.3 Micro-enterprise

WIT staff and the Rwandan Government recognize the importance of diversifying economic activities, and providing alternate livelihoods in this agriculturally based society. Shortages of arable land and increased cultivation in Mutara, which is prone to drought, or in unproductive mountain areas such as Mudasomwa raise warning flags. The high numbers of cattle in the fragile ecosystem of previously uninhabited park areas of Mutara increase the high risk for environmental degradation and future 'dust-bowl' conditions. Certain phases of the agricultural cycle require heavy manual labor, and are particularly difficult for female headed households. The elderly and handicapped also need alternative sources of income.

The Government hopes to direct youth in particular into other economic activities that will enhance development by providing much needed goods and services, moving away from subsistence agriculture as the only available livelihood. WIT's emphasis on micro enterprise is an important aspect of this effort. WIT has funded 812 women associations for a total of 1,091,139 frw in grants, benefiting 68,366 individuals. This constitutes 17% of WIT funds, and 25% of their total project activities. The focus of income generating activities is in trading and marketing of agricultural products through cooperatives. They also include: soap making; snack food sales; poultry and rabbit raising; bakeries; butcher shops; tailoring; used clothing sales and handicrafts production; cattle trading and fish sales; honey production; soft drink shops; restaurants; trading in hides; tie dying; brick making and marketing of rocks for construction; small shops for general commerce; and pottery and grinding mills.

Commune Kinyamakara: A community woman leader had seen a successful cooperative in another community created through an umbrella organization of 17 agricultural associations with 225 members that sells fertilizers and equipment. She saw the need for assisting the vulnerable in her area, and gathered 50 women together for an OTI funded activity. They decided to form a cooperative to market the agricultural products of other women's associations, focusing on beans and sorghum. They also sell salt, sugar, maize, flour and soap, and stock seed to resell at planting time. Despite 8,000 frw a month rent for their building in this roadside village, and 1,000 frw demanded by

commune officials, the women are repaying their loan and were able to feed their families and purchase dresses at Christmas.

3.3 Resolving social tension

OTI's activities that provided access to housing and assistance to restart livelihood activities were identified in focus and large group meetings as the primary means of reducing social tension. Lack of housing and poverty create jealousy and social tension. Given the enormous need, one can conclude that in the area of shelter, the transition is not over. Continued lack of housing for large numbers of people is likely to be a source of tension. In a meeting with approximately 1,500 women in Runinya, fully 1/3 indicated that they did not yet have housing but were living with other women, in temporary shelters, or some even in animal pens. Meetings in Gisenyi prefecture identified housing as a major concern, with major needs in the province as refugees return from Congo. Women in Mutara were faced with rising prices of materials, and poor crops, which prevented the purchase of cement to make their structures durable during the rainy season.

Participation in OTI funded associations also provided women with friendships, and helped them recognize that they were not alone in their suffering. Women in associations across Rwanda identified the companionship and sharing of problems as one of the primary benefits of association membership.

There were a variety of perspectives on the government policy of *imugudugu*, or "villagization." Villagization is the concentration of people in villages near roadways, rather than in scattered homesteads near their fields. Some women, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, found it comforting to have close neighbors. But many who rely primarily on agriculture expressed concern about soil fertility and distance from their fields. One difference was clearly the plot of land and type of housing available. Where OTI funded housing plots resembled suburban developments, with one half hectare of land and gardens next to houses that families had constructed to meet their own needs, people expressed greater satisfaction. When they were provided housing in crowded conditions, without land for gardens and no sanitary facilities, as under other donor projects, people expressed concern. The difference between housing from one area to another was as great as between a suburban housing development and a shanty town. Choice and quality of life will have much to do with acceptance of current government villagization policy.

3.3.1 Building unity and creating space for reconciliation

The stated goal of the WIT project was to "strengthen women's economic and political position so that they can rebuild their lives and promote a society built on tolerance and respect. But with the genocide still fresh in the minds of Rwandans, people feel fear, hatred and shame before their neighbors. Progress on addressing issues of justice has been extremely slow, and more than 130,000 prisoners languish in local jails. The government has recognized the impossibility of taking all these cases to trial, and has classified people involved in the genocide into four groups, (1) the architects of the genocide, (2) the executors of the genocide, (3) individuals forced to kill, and (4) those who destroyed property. The first group will go through the national justice system, the

last three will be judged locally, through the traditional system of *gachacha*, a form of restitution and punishment which is not traditionally used in the case of capital crimes.

Stories of false accusations are whispered among Hutu; Tutsi who escaped the genocide demand justice. The government is engaged in a process of training elected local government representatives at the cell, sector, and commune levels. This involves examining the historical roots of the genocide, and sensitizing people on the necessity of living together in peace, at the same time as the army continues its war in Congo against the ex-FAR and *interhamwe*.

Despite the overwhelming legacy of fear and hatred created by the genocide, WIT has encouraged mixed groups to work together. The core of the problem lies between Tutsi victims of the genocide and Hutu wives of prisoners accused of committing acts of genocide. There were a number of examples of conflict resolution activities across the country, from groups taking the first faltering steps towards unity to wives of prisoners discussing their shame with victims of the genocide.

Commune Rukara: Informal meetings with elected women representatives following our focus group discussion led to additional information on the ethnic composition of elected women representatives. In this area where Tutsi '59ers' were in the majority, one of the elected women participating in our focus group was the wife of a Hutu prisoner.

Commune Runyinya: One of the most moving experiences of the entire trip was a meeting on a hillside with 1500 women from a large group of WIT funded associations made up of 1,059 widows and 800 wives of men in prison. Each group worked separately with a nun and a priest over an extended period of time. They explained how they had been afraid – or ashamed – to meet. The wives of prisoners asked for forgiveness for what their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons had done. They explained how they had come together in peace and unity, and began attending church together, instead of on separate days. They talked about the changes they were going through and their efforts to overcome the past. "Bringing us together was like medicine to our souls."

Interestingly, there was an emphasis on truth-telling, even during this large public meeting. At one point, a woman indicated that their husbands were glad they were reconciling with the widow's group, but that they "didn't really have much time to exchange ideas." Another woman immediately accused her of lying, saying that when they took food there was time to talk to their husbands. The WIT staff had indicated earlier that a number of men had refused their wives' food, because they felt that their wives' apologies could be used against them. Clearly, justice and mercy will only follow truth.

3.4 Women and the political sphere: new political structures

In traditional Rwandan society, women were not permitted to speak publicly or take active roles in local or national government. When OTI considered that women made up 54% of the population, and headed 34% of the households, it was felt women would need to take an increasing role in local government. With these high percentages of the population female

following the genocide, the Ministry of Family and Women Promotion sought ways to help women “play a larger role in the political and economic life of their communities.”

The participation of women in local NGOs, church groups and agricultural associations is not new. Various kinds of local women’s groups existed in the context of an array of grassroots organizations, gaining visibility beginning in the mid-1970s, and flowering in the mid-1980s. Democratization initiatives at the end of the 1980s and the deterioration of government services contributed to the proliferation of organizations.

In the post-genocide period there has been a dramatic increase in associations –local NGO members of Pro Femme, the women’s umbrella organization, increased from 13 to 36. This was a result of three factors. First, the need to provide solace and support engendered a spontaneous reconstitution of pre-existing groups and the formation of new ones. Secondly, donor assistance was often predicated on the existence of groups and associations, and served as a requirement for distribution of funds. Donors also provided resources and technical expertise to assist fledgling organizations. Finally, activism on the part of the Ministry of Gender and Women’s Development, and a strong commitment to encouraging and supporting women’s associations and to focus on women’s needs supported the development of women’s groups at all levels. This was the context in which WIT was established.

The Ministry has played an important role in developing structures at the local level which have facilitated the implementation of the WIT project. WIT-funded projects were one element in providing women the basics to participate. Through WIT, women aired their complaints and concerns without hesitation in meetings with burgomasters and prefects across Rwanda. The participation of rural women in associations has provided a context in which they have developed their skills for speaking publicly and participating in the political and decision making life of their communities.

Women’s committees were set up under the Ministry in 1996. The former minister of gender noted that the newly created local government structures were modeled on this first local governing women’s committee. The current structure for commune councils specifies that there will be at least 4 elected women members (out of 10). Two women committee representatives sit on the council. One of the two youth representatives and one of two “wise ones” are to be women. In focus groups we learned that large numbers of women leaders of associations (including those funded by WIT) were elected to local councils in recent elections and that women have been elected to positions other than those designated for women. This means that women can have an increasing voice in local government, and they are speaking out publicly in new ways.

WIT’s success with women’s associations has also provided incentives for local authorities to be responsive to women’s needs and the needs of more vulnerable groups. At the same time, two burgomasters and one prefect may have been replaced because they blocked WIT activities or tampered with WIT funds. Although there were no direct causal links, the combination of frank reports and the ultimate removal of the individuals in question suggest that the Ministry was active in ensuring that WIT should work effectively with women’s associations.

Focus Groups with elected women representatives: In focus groups of elected women from cell, sector and commune levels, a high percentage were also WIT association leaders. In Commune

Rukara, 7 participants were elected representatives with 3 also serving as association leaders. In Commune Kanama, of 9 elected women participants only one was not also the leader of an association: she was a schoolteacher. Of 5 participants in Rwerere, only one did not head an association as well. In Kayove, 4 of 5 were association leaders, and again, the only exception was a schoolteacher. In Rusumo, all five elected women randomly selected to participate in the focus group were also association leaders.

This clearly shows that educated women in positions of leadership in their communities -- many because of their participation in WIT activities -- are being selected to lead their communities.

3.5 Development of Women's Communal Funds

Initially, WIT grants for income generating activities were to be repaid to an orphans' fund set up at the Commune to help orphans with school fees. But these orphans' funds were managed by the burgomaster, and problems of transparency and accountability led WIT to search for an alternative system. Working with the Ministry, the idea of the Women's Communal Fund (WCF) was developed. This fund was to be a revolving fund at the local level. Women would repay into the Fund so that new loans could be made to other women and women's associations.

Creation of the Women's Communal Fund is an attempt to institutionalize and ensure the continuation of WIT-type revolving credit for poor women at local levels. A total of 35 WCF have received funding to date; of these the 17 assisted by WIT demonstrate clear operation procedures, excellent record keeping, and excellent loan repayment. The sustainability and full impact of the Women's Communal Funds is still unknown, but WIT staff are well positioned to provide guidance and assist in the establishment of appropriate mechanisms and procedures for these funds. The new Minister of Gender indicated a background in micro-credit and an understanding of issues that should be addressed. She is clearly concerned that steps be taken to ensure the sustainability of these funds.

3.6 The Foundations of WIT's Success

Throughout this evaluation the team explored the question, "What should WIT become?" Three scenarios were proposed. First, WIT should be placed under the umbrella of an international NGO. Second, WIT should become an independent Rwandan NGO. Third, WIT should become a micro-finance credit institution. The ultimate goal was to determine what mechanism would give WIT the ability to maintain its role in empowering Rwandan women and rebuilding Rwandan society based on tolerance and respect, which have characterized WIT activities to this point.

Interviews and discussions helped lead to the conclusion that the unique partnership between USAID and the Ministry has given WIT the authority and independence to succeed. The one scenario which was not included in our possible future directions, is the one we have determined is the correct answer:

WIT should continue in its present form as a project directly under USAID.

Below are seven issues that outline some of the reasons for WIT's success. Together these issues provide the basis for our conclusion, that changing WIT's form will change its impact and

effectiveness. WIT is an exceptional program. Even in another form it would be a useful part of USAID's strategy. But to maximize its role and ensure its continued impact at the same or a higher level, it should be continued in its present form.

3.6.1 Unusual partnership: USAID, Ministry of Gender and WIT

Although it is difficult to pinpoint, there are indications that relationships with Ministry staff and Ministry agents at the Commune level have influenced the evolution of the WIT program, and WIT's involvement has influenced Ministry programs and direction. The relationship has been a positive, synergistic one, leading to strengthening of both the WIT program and the Ministry. Both USAID/OTI and the Ministry had similar goals: to support women's groups to rebuild their lives and promote tolerance and respect. The Ministry focused early on a program that would help women play a "larger role in the political and economic life of their communities." The Ministry also expressed an early interest in establishing Women's Communal Funds, and WIT has provided a structure and a training model which the Ministry hopes to build on as they expand their assistance to these groups.

Interviews with WIT staff, ministry officials and local government actors underlined the importance of this unusual program which links USAID to Ministry staff in an uniquely close partnership.

Links to the Ministry support WIT's work on the ground. The Ministry has been critical to improved access and cooperation from local government actors in the communes and prefectures. At the same time, there is some evidence that the Ministry has taken an active role in ensuring that WIT can work effectively with women's associations at the local level. As mentioned earlier, WIT's frank reports may have influenced the departure of certain local government officials – something that would not occur were WIT under an international NGO.

At the same time, USAID backing helps to maintain WIT's autonomy and thus supports many of the critical elements to its effectiveness: logistics, vehicles remaining operational, decision-making, rapid response, transparency, monitoring, morale and reliability. Putting WIT under USAID provides the protection of an international donor – protection, authority, and power vis-a-vis the Ministry and local government officials. This has been very important to the success of the program. In the future

International NGOs do not have the level of authority or respect that would enable WIT to function in the same way currently in Rwanda. They would not have the necessary influence over local burgomasters and prefects. International NGOs are viewed with a combination of suspicion and jealousy by the ministry and local government officials. This potential relationship could have a negative impact on WIT's effectiveness in the field.

Local NGOs in Rwanda are widely viewed as a job creation program for elites. As a local NGO, WIT staff and management would confront this demoralizing viewpoint. In addition, they would be forced to constantly search for additional funding sources, in a climate where funding is drying up. This search would distract WIT from its activities.

In addition, the reporting requirements for multiple funding sources would require more administrative staff, and greater management burdens. A program noted for its small staff and large number of distant activities would tend to become less flexible, less agile and more top heavy.

3.6.2 Rural focus

Most USAID programs work through local and international NGOs to deliver programs. WIT is an exception to this approach, and indicates a real commitment to reaching remote areas and especially vulnerable groups. The rural focus of the OTI/WIT program means that assistance goes directly to rural women's associations, without the multiple intermediaries and associated delays that are more typical of assistance to rural communities. This focus on rural women as opposed to elite women's organizations or government institutions working with rural women has enhanced the capacity of rural women to assume leadership roles in their local communities. WIT as an organization has also demonstrated a greater ability to reach deeply into isolated rural areas.

3.6.3 Small size

WIT's small size ensures its flexibility and adaptability. It has been able to shift its focus and adapt to changing needs and circumstances. WIT is also small enough that it doesn't attract jealousy and greed. If it were an independent NGO, it would become a much bigger prize for people with less access and opportunity.

WIT's small size also means that most of the 70% of the estimated 8.2 million population living in poverty cannot be reached. But, despite WIT's small size, it has exceptionally high visibility, and has thus served as a catalyst for other programs. This visibility has encouraged imitation, and the formation of associations who seek alternate funding sources or local solutions to the need for assistance. The message heard across Rwanda, was that with little donor funding available, local groups and communes must help each other to find solutions to their problems.

3.6.4 Focus on women and women's needs:

Creating an opening for women to speak out impacts on the entire family and ultimately will change the mentality of the society. Support for women's economic empowerment has enabled them to become participants in the public spheres of their society. Continued participation in the public sphere has the potential to bring women's views on peace and tolerance into the dialogue, to their families, and to their communities. It would impact future generations, and help resolve many current problems.

3.6.5 WIT implementation structures: women assume new roles

WIT has developed a series of approaches to assisting women that force them out of their isolated communities, to travel and interact with formal structures in the society. Women leaders are required to travel to OTI/WIT office in Kigali to sign for their checks, open bank accounts in their commune or prefecture, identify the lowest cost materials for their programs, and purchase and transport the materials they need. WIT established

procedures early on that required association presidents to travel outside their communes, all the way to Kigali as well as within their prefectures. This requirement is a fundamental step in teaching women about their own capacities, and building their confidence to participate in other ways in the life of their communes.

3.6.6 Agility and Flexibility

WIT has been an institution that has been agile and able to adapt to an evolving situation. Lessons have been learned, and the program adapted to address those needed changes. Early project documents emphasized WIT in a training role, which became less critical in the intermediate period, but which may resurface as an emphasis as Women's Communal Funds evolve. For example, reimbursements evolved from payments to local orphans funds, to repayment to Women's Communal Funds, so that other women could also receive credit. That flexibility and agility will enable WIT to transition to a more development oriented role.

3.6.7 Management

WIT has continued to develop appropriate management structures to meet the needs of the project. Recognizing that there was a need to monitor and evaluate the impact of the program, WIT put in place a system for self-monitoring and evaluation. A Program Monitor was hired to follow up on the use of funds and to signal problems to the WIT field teams. Synergy was created as Team members were alerted to possible problems they might encounter in other activities. The overall effect has been extremely beneficial – permitting Teams to continue their work, while an outstanding monitor assists them in managing the large number of projects underway. It permits specialization within WIT: teams focus on training and implementation, while the monitor focuses on follow-up and evaluation. The result is a dynamic and growing depth of understanding of the problems and strengths of the entire WIT program, by the WIT Staff and Ministry representatives. This contributes indirectly to the development of knowledge and future program direction and management within the Ministry. Witness the current Minister's interest in strengthening the WCFs and her recognition of the kinds of problems they are encountering.

4.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

This evaluation concludes that the OTI Women in Transitions Program has met and sometimes exceeded its stated objectives:

- USAID/OTI, through the WIT program has provided assistance to women's associations to restart their economic activities, thereby reducing hunger and providing women with the economic power to feed, clothe and provide for the basic needs of their families.
- USAID/OTI assistance to women's associations in rural areas has contributed to easing of social tensions by providing shelter. Returning refugees have reclaimed their homes, while OTI has helped provide housing to those with none.

- WIT has reduced the anger and bitterness experienced by genocide survivors who observed food assistance being delivered to refugees across the borders, while the victims of the genocide previously had received nothing. This has set the stage for increased tolerance.
- USAID/OTI assistance through the WIT program has reduced community tensions by providing opportunities for women to join together in associations and share their joys and sorrows. The sharing of problems and the realization that all are suffering in the post-genocide period has increased tolerance and respect. A group of associations of widows and wives of prisoners are communicating regularly, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation – which can serve as a model for other associations and communes.
- The WIT program has given women experience and confidence to speak out publicly by setting requirements that encouraged women to transcend their traditional roles and travel beyond their communes. They have traveled from their communes to Kigali to obtain checks, opened bank accounts, and participated in housing construction – all roles that would have assumed by their husbands in the past.
- WIT has provided opportunities for women to take leadership roles in their associations. The development of women's leadership through assisting their associations to obtain economic assistance has raised their standing in their communities, and enabled them to be elected to positions in local government.
- Women in WIT funded associations have had experience speaking out in large groups, before prefects, burgomasters and foreign delegations. This has given them confidence, and sets the stage for their active participation in local government.
- WIT's work in the communes led to the formation of Women's Committees by the Ministry of Gender. These committees became the model for local government which has been developed by the government.
- WIT appears to have had an impact on other donor programs. There is a remarkable similarity between the WIT approach and some of the projects launched later by other donors. This is visible especially in the focus on economic empowerment of women, as a means to open up other avenues for participation. An example is the Rwanda Women's Initiative of UNHCR. The RWI was launched in 1997, with more substantial funding than was granted WIT. But many of the projects were similar (supplying goats, assisting people with house construction, and aid to income-generating projects). RWI has also provided aid to the Collective of Rwandan Women's NGOs (Pro-Femmes), and to several individual Rwandan NGOs that focus on women's needs. When first established, this initiative had generous funding, but the funding has diminished significantly in the past two years.

OTI's Women in Transition initiative has had a positive impact on the situation in Rwanda, and particularly on women's lives. Continued efforts are required to ensure that the progress can be sustained, and to ensure a peaceful transition in areas where refugees are still returning. There are a number of lessons that can be drawn from OTI's experience with this program that can be used in other post-crisis societies.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

The role envisioned for WIT in the following paragraphs does not constitute a change in what WIT is doing, or what it should do. It involves training for current WIT staff, an additional monitor and a training specialist, or perhaps someone who could do both. It envisions WIT developing a long-term strategy – which WIT Staff has not been able to do, because they have been in a temporary status with only yearly funding from the inception of the project. The WIT program should continue in its current form with some enhancement of staff capacity, while linking it more closely to USAID strategic objectives and intermediate results.

5.1 Continue the WIT project in its current form for a 3-5 year period.

All evidence available indicates that the WIT program achieves its success because of its unusual form. It is the Ministry influence at the commune level that ensures local support from communal authorities, and it is USAID's umbrella that protects it from undue external influences and ensures the excellent management of resources that enable WIT to reach the most isolated and impoverished areas of the country. Placing WIT under an international NGO would create a fundamental conflict with the Ministry. Spinning it off as an independent NGO would limit its effectiveness and ultimately its reach. It is not ready to function independently as a micro credit institution, and the search for funds would hamper program delivery. USAID should continue WIT in its present form for a 3-5 year period, for example, and then reevaluate to determine if a need still exists, and whether it would be appropriate to change its form at that time. This would enable WIT to engage in a medium to long-term strategy, which it has been unable to do in the past, due to yearly funding and constant threat of closure.

5.2 Link WIT to USAID program planning activities, and include WIT in results measurement as part of SO1 and SO3.

The WIT program is a cross-sectoral program which is positioned to contribute to the achievement of two of USAID's three strategic objectives: SO1 (Local Government Initiatives), and SO3 (Household Food Security). To do this, WIT needs to be more closely linked with USAID training, program planning and implementation. There is potential for a clear synergy, as WIT works with local Women's committees and the Women's Communal Fund.

5.3 Enhance WIT staff knowledge of micro credit through training and study trips to increase their knowledge and capacity to train local groups in development and management of the Women's Communal Fund.

WIT Staff, as it works with the Women's Communal Funds, is developing a future micro credit program for the poor and vulnerable women at the commune level. They have made excellent progress, but are constrained through lack of sufficient knowledge of possible models and a general lack of expertise on the kinds of rules and regulations which work for this type of institution. WIT interest rates, for example, are substantially lower than for other credit mechanisms in Rwanda. To ensure the sustainability of the WCFs this issue needs to be carefully examined. This problem could be easily remedied by providing WIT staff with training in micro credit organizations. Study trips to visit excellent examples of micro credit program in Uganda, such as PRESTO, training programs through KREP (Kenyan Rural Enterprise Program)

in Kenya or visits to examples of other outstanding micro credit programs in Sub Saharan Africa should be a part of this training.

5.4 Assist WIT staff in continuing to meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable by addressing both transition and development needs. Transition funds should be continued with the simultaneous development of the Women's Communal Fund.

Different women and their communities are in vastly different stages of development, depending on when they returned to Rwanda and the conditions they found upon their return. The needs of recent returnees who are just beginning their "transition" phase are different from groups who are moving into a "development" phase. Transition needs, for example, might include housing, and would place a greater emphasis on initial activities to help women restart their lives. Development activities might mean that WIT would offer assistance a second time to some groups, or help women who are ready to expand their enterprises as a way of expanding developmental opportunities in their communities. By creating "two pots," or two distinct types of funds, which are both repaid into the Women's Communal Fund, WIT can meet the needs of both groups. In transition activities, repayment might be at 80%, and some activities would not be repaid, while Women's Communal Fund activities would always be repaid with interest.

WIT Transition Funds: WIT must continue to assist the most vulnerable to restart their lives. Goat and housing are not repaid, because they are not income generating. When the very poor and vulnerable receive their first assistance for income generating activities, WIT provided loans at 80% repayment. These loans should be repaid into the WCF, even though they do not originate there, thus further strengthening the WCF.

Women's Communal Fund: The WCFs should continue to target poor rural women with income generating activities which will be repaid into the WCF, so that future loans can be made to needy women in that commune. But here the emphasis would be on development, and assisting women to expand their existing economic activities, or respond to local needs by providing certain types of enterprises or services which would move the community forward in its development. Here WIT should continue to work with the Women's Communal Fund, providing training, and establishing procedures.

WIT and local communities must also examine internal rules to ensure the financial sustainability of these funds. Loans should only be made to viable income generating activities, which have some assurance of being repaid. To do this WIT staff need skills in feasibility assessment, and to pass those skills on to WCF members.

It is essential to establish transparent rules and procedures for selection and funding of activities, which are understood and accepted by association members throughout the commune. In some communes loans have been made to individual women. WIT, the Ministry and local communities need to carefully consider this issue. Virtually all micro-finance programs are built on group lending models. Even when individuals receive funds, the groups they belong to are accountable for their repayment. This is important in Rwanda both for the financial guarantee that will ensure the availability of funds for new groups, as well as to contribute to the creation of unity and solidarity in the society. There has been no standardization of procedures. Do loans to individual women reduce the impact of the building of unity and trust in the society? Or does the importance of economic expansion override the jealousies that may be created by individual

loans? This needs to be carefully examined and widely discussed with WCF committees and communes.

5.5 WIT and USAID/Rwanda should work with other credit organizations in Rwanda to create a “credit continuum” for Rwandan Women.

WIT staff needs to have a better understanding of other credit institutions and efforts to create economic opportunities for women that have been attempted in Rwanda. Presentations by these groups to WIT staff, opportunities for exchanges and training, etc., would help WIT staff to identify the gaps and develop a program which fits the needs of those not reached by other credit institutions.

All credit institutions available to women need to meet and develop an overall plan for meeting the need for credit, from the most vulnerable women’s associations to independent women entrepreneurs. It is critical that the “gaps” be filled, i.e., that credit is made available to women at all levels of development. The role of savings programs in establishing credit, as required by Duterimbere, should also be examined in terms of bridge activities for groups who will require funding beyond WIT and the WCF.

5.6 WIT should continue to work with the Women’s Communal Funds, providing information and training to establish a sustainable micro-credit program at the commune level, and establish structures and mechanisms which can be shared with and spread by the Ministry.

WIT should continue to work with WCFs and further develop mechanisms and procedures that will help this mechanism become established and survive. The Ministry is concerned about their own WCFs, and recognizes the importance of establishing structures and rules. They would be open to the model WIT develops, and WIT recommendations.

5.7 WIT should continue to provide training for Women’s Committees and other elected women representatives at the cell, sector, and commune level. Their efforts should be integrated with USAID’s local government SOI, but focus on strengthening women’s capacity to participate in decision making and to counter pressures for a return to traditional roles.

WIT staff have already worked with commune-level women’s committees, and have the trust and the networks to be effective. It is important to support women in the development of their capacity to speak out if they are to be effective members of local government committees – they have made advances, but much remains to be done.

In post-conflict societies there is an opening for women immediately following the crisis – followed by a reaction or backlash, and domestic pressure for women to return to traditional roles. They need international donor support because we have seen that women can be voices for conflict resolution, fostering tolerance, and encouraging unity in their communities. Women are also key to the education of the next generation.

It is desirable to support a counterweight to forces of centralization. Local government can be seen as an element of civil society in Rwanda, in that it provides an outlet for local voices and

thus represents a countervailing force to the pressures for centralization in the government. To do this requires both supporting local government structures, which WIT has been doing through their work with the Women's Committees, but also by supporting other elements of civil society. It is essential that local communities are empowered and that the voices of women are heard in local decision making. USAID's support to this experiment in local government is essential, and everything possible to ensure its success must be done. WIT can and should be an important element of this effort.

Rwandan Women will need additional support to be effective advocates for peace and unity at the local level. WIT staff could have a greater impact on women's political participation with additional training and support. For example, WIT could train women's committees to develop action plans and priorities for their communities, and then identify strategies for pushing forward their agenda at the commune council level. The design and implementation of new activities to support women's participation in local decision making would be an important contribution to these new political structures at the community level. WIT has the network and trust to be effective in this area.

5.8 WIT activities with women's associations should ensure that target associations have the necessary resources to make the transition to development.

WIT has focused on transition. Now it is time to move towards development, while still maintaining assistance to vulnerable groups still in transition. WIT has the capacity to operate at both levels. In the area of development, for example, WIT should now look also at additional support to some previously-funded groups who may need assistance to become self-reliant.

Commune Mudasonwa: With lime, manure, tools and seeds, women in this commune were able to terrace their mountainside fields and grow excellent crops of potatoes and wheat, planning to sell and trade for beans and goats. A site visit to the fields demonstrated a marked difference between these lush crops grown with multiple inputs, and the scattered and weak shoots on neighboring fields which received none. But marketing proved impossible – the burgomaster of a neighboring commune chose to block trade with these associations and work with a different commune. While the women have been able to eat their potatoes, they have not been able to grind and market their wheat, obtain the beans their children need for protein, or the goats they need for soil fertility. Without goats, this area faces famine in the future.

5.9 USAID/SO3 and WIT should engage in multi-year planning to ensure local food security in the medium and long term through development of a multi-level transport and marketing system.

As we have seen, wheat is produced, but there is no marketing system, nor local grinding mills. Vegetable oils are almost non-existent in Rwanda and there are almost no oil presses. WIT, working with USAID to establish a recovery plan, could assist in the development of agricultural diversity and local commerce leading to self-sufficiency – an essential step in national recovery. The goal would be to initially increase contact and interaction through markets at the commune and prefecture levels, which would bring together individuals producing a variety of agricultural products in a market setting, and provide associations and individual producers with the opportunity to sell and trade to meet family needs.

In view of the widespread and overwhelming problem of transport and marketing, WIT needs to work with USAID planners, to set priorities and develop a plan for local survival while national transportation and marketing systems are developed. In the long term, government policy import and tax structures must be revised to encourage, not prohibit, the increase in transport vehicles in the interior.

USAID and other donors need to encourage a government policy reform to encourage the expansion of rural transport. Prefectures across the country need to be connected through trade so that people can produce cash crops and meet local food needs. In the past the government encouraged regional crop specialization, but without transport, this policy cannot work. For now, communes and prefectures must have greater self-sufficiency, with a variety of crops grown in the local microclimates, to ensure productivity and trade at the commune and prefecture level. This would also increase contact between individuals and associations in communes and prefectures. It could be the first step in the process of expanding commerce across the country.

6.0 LESSONS LEARNED:

The following list of lessons learned are provided specifically for USAID/OTI in Washington, and place the results and impact of the Women in Transitions program in the broader context of transition policy and OTI programming world wide. These lessons grow directly out of the Rwanda experience, but should inform OTI's activities elsewhere in the world.

- Activities that promote and increase women's economic empowerment can lead to political participation by women.
- Economic activities focused on women, particularly in groups and associations, contribute to the reduction of tension and the creation of unity in post-conflict settings.
- Activities that require women to assume non-traditional roles in one area help them to acquire the necessary confidence and self esteem to take on other non-traditional roles.
- When women are seen as leaders and individuals with the capacity to assist others to address their problems, they can be elected to positions that would otherwise be filled by men.
- Direct targeting of rural women's associations in post conflict settings is a viable addition to, but not a replacement for, targeting of national, urban-based NGOs.
- Urban-based NGOs can play a role in directly addressing government on their level, on issues of women's legal rights, for example.
- Local control and management of resources through mechanisms like the Women's Communal Fund, managed by a rural Women's Committee, can be models for future transition and development programming.
- Working in a post-conflict or post-genocide setting requires flexibility and adaptability in programming. Many of OTI's current mechanisms should be used as a model by USAID

itself, to better meet the needs of transition environments. To remain relevant, USAID needs to develop more flexible mechanisms for project implementation.

- One-time inputs to particularly vulnerable and impoverished groups may not be sufficient to launch them into a development phase. Groups with problems should be carefully studied, and follow-up assistance should be provided under certain conditions.

Attachment A:

MEETINGS WITH WIT ASSOCIATIONS IN THE COMMUNES

Prefecture	Commune	No. Associations represented	No. Women Participating in meeting	No. Focus Groups (No. Participants)	Site Visit: Association Projects visited
Kigali Ville	Nyarugenge	Approx. 12	Approx. 40		Women's clinic meeting
Kigali Rurale	Nyakabanda	6	Approx. 80	2 (15)	
	Mbogo	1	12		Marakuja
	Tare	2	Approx. 75	1 (9)	Livestock
Mutara	Nyagatare	12	Approx. 46	1 (6)	Bricks, handicrafts, technical school (orphans fund)
	Rukara		37	1 (7)	Pharmacy, shelter
Gisenyi	Kanama	9	Approx. 75	1 (10)	Potatoes
	Rwerere	8	Approx. 50	1 (5)	Potatoes
	Kayove	15	Approx. 60	1 (5)	Potatoes
Kibungo	Rusumo	Approx. 14	Approx. 60	2 (6)	
Butare	Runinya	79	Approx. 1,500		
Gikongoro	Mudasomwa	19	38		Wheat, potatoes
	Kinyamakara	1	12	1 (12)	Agricultural marketing Coop store
TOTAL:	13 Communes	178 Associations	Approx. 2,085 women	11 focus groups, 75 participants	

Attachment B:

INTERVIEWS

USAID in Washington:

Ron Ulrich, Rwanda Desk Officer
Dick McCall, Chief of Staff, A/AID
Rick Barton, Director, OTI
Heather McHugh, former WIT Program Officer, OTI
Roger Conrad, WIT Program Officer, OTI

US Government Personnel in Rwanda:

George Lewis, Director, USAID
Christine Hjelt, Program Officer
Pierre Munyura, Democracy & Governance
Serge Rwamasirabo, Food Security/Agriculture

WIT Staff:

Buddy Shanks, Project Coordinator
Peace Uwineza, Assistant Coordinator
Teddy Gatsinzi, Monitor
Catherine Niwenkunda, Finance Assistant
Samson Nzayisenga, Finance Assistant
Louise Sayinzonga, Resource Manager
Sheri Alphonsine, Resource Manager
Julie Uwamiwiza, Resource Manager
Faustin Vuningoma, Resource Manager
Bayito Innocent, Resource Manager
Eugenie Unkunda, Resource Manager

Donor Agencies:

Anne Thompson, consultant to the World Bank
Political Officer, Dutch Embassy
Mme Christine Kibarite, UNDP Trust Fund for Women
Gahaya Chantal, UNHCR Rwanda Women's Initiative
Alfonse Munyakazi, UNFPA
Dr. Daniel Verna, Nutrition Project Officer, UNICEF

International NGOs

SNV (Dutch Peace Corps)
OXFAM Quebec
Human Rights Watch
Catholic Relief Services
ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)

Local NGOs consulted individually:

Pro Femmes
Reseau des Femmes
Seruka
Bon Pasteur (Umushumba Mwiza)
Duterimbere
Hagaruka
Avega (Association des Veuves du Genocide)
Solidarite Paysanne Chretienne
AFCF (Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille)
COCOF (Conseil Constitutif des Femmes)
FAWE
RISD (Rwandese Institute for Sustainable Development)

Mixed projects and associations with a gender aspect:

Centre IWAACU
COSYLI (Conseil National des Organisations Syndicales Libres au Rwanda)
DUHAMIC – ADRI (Action pour le Developpement Rural Integre)
INGABO (Gitarama)
Imbaraga (Kigali)
PRADEC (Gitarama)

Government of Rwanda

Minister of Gender Angelina Muganza
Director of Gender, John Mutamba
Marie Claire Mukasine, Director Generale,
Mr. Karega, Migeprofe
Ms. Gloriose, Migeprofe
Aloysie Inyumba, National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
Hosea Niyibizi, Fonds d'Assistance aux Rescapes du Genocide et des Massacres

Academic, Religious and Professional Leaders and Groups

Abbe Gahaya, Butare
Laurien Ntezimana, Service Animation Theologique (SAT), Butare
Dr. Emile Rwamasirabo, Rector, Universite Nationale de Butare
Association of Women Students, Butare
Maitre. Francois Rwangampuhwe, Attorney, Women victims of violence

Local Government Officials

Kigali Rurale:
Prefect
Burgomasters:
Nyakabanda
Tare

Mutara:
Prefect
Burgomasters:
Nyagatare
Rukara

Gisenyi:
Sub Prefect
Burgomaster:
Rwerere

Kibungo
Burgomaster:
Rusumo

Gikongoro
Burgomaster:
Mudasomwa

Attachment C:

NGO PARTICIPANTS IN A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION, MAY 21, 1999

AFCF (Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille): Epiphane Karangwaho

ARTCF (Association Rwandaise des Travailleurs Chrétiens/Section Feminine): Josephine Mukahigiro (Coordinatrice)

ARBEF (Association Rwandaise pour le Bien-Etre Familial): Josephine Mukakalisa

ASOFERWA: Josée Uwimana

Avega-Agahozo: Uwambyeyi Esperance

Benimpuhwe: Gatoyi Odette Gatoyi

Benishyaka: Clement Kagabo

Duterimbere: Drocella Mukagatare

Fondation Tumurere

Hagaruka: Alida Furaha Umutoni

JOC-F (Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne, section Féminine): Leomille Mukankusi

Préfecture de Kigali Ville PVK: Immaculée Mutetewaba

Pro-Femme – Twese Hamwe: Jeanine Kambanda (Exec. Sect.) & Matilda Kayitesi

Profemmes/Twese Hamwe: Jeanine Kambanda

RBEF (Association Rwandaise pour la Bien Etre Familial): Josephine

Reseau des Femmes: Révocata Uwamutara

Rwanda Rwiza (or Rwanda Rw'Ejo?): Sylvie Urekeyisoni

SERUKA: Alice Ndegeya (Exec. Sect.)

SWAA/Rwanda (Society for Women Against Aids): Cecile Ndoli

Urumuli Rwurukundo: Evelyne Mukagacinya

Attachment D:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – WOMEN LEADERS & ASSOCIATIONS

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

1. Why do you think you were elected? What do people look for in their leaders / women leaders?
2. What kinds of leadership positions have you held before? Association memberships?
3. How important are associations in your community? How have they changed?
4. Were any women in this commune elected to non-women designated LG positions?
5. How can women people bring problems and concerns to the attention of the burgomaster and prefect? What gives women confidence to speak out in meetings and before authorities?
6. What have you heard about the law on inheritance for women (daughters and wives)? Would /How would you and other women in your local area benefit from this law?

RECONCILIATION

1. What are the sources of tension in your community?
2. What helps to resolve tension in your community?
3. What kinds of things have occurred here recently which increase or resolve tension?
4. What are the steps to unity and tolerance?

SITUATION OF WOMEN

1. Who are the most vulnerable in your commune?
2. What are the most important problems facing women and the vulnerable?
3. What kinds of support do women/vulnerable need? What do women need to advance?
4. What is the value of associations?
5. What kinds of contributions has WIT made to associations / the commune? How has this changed your community?

Attachment E:

WOMEN'S COMMUNAL FUND QUESTIONS

Establishment of WCF:

- Amount collected?
- How decided?
- Who collected funds?
- Ease or difficulty of collecting funds? Why?

Criteria established for loans:

- Priorities for lending?
- Requirements for proposals?
- Interest – amount and when deducted?
- Recipients – groups or individuals?
- Eligibility – members or anyone?

Loans given:

- Number?
- Amounts?
- Problems with repayment?
- Methods of explaining rules ?

Why is WCF important?

Who manages the WCF?

What are the challenges or problems your fund faces?

Attachment F:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BURGOMASTERS AND PREFECTS

BACKGROUND OF COMMUNE/PREFECTURE:

Population:

- Total population?
- Percentage of population displaced?
- Number of returnees: old case load, refugee camps, dates of return?

Impact of the genocide on this commune: estimated deaths during genocide

- Number of widows?
- Number of prisoners?

Response of the commune to meeting the needs of women & vulnerable:

- Orphans fund?
- Women: widows, women with husbands in prison?
- Access of poor children to education?

What do you see as the key issues for reconciliation?

What do you see as the most important approaches to resolving tension in your commune?

We have heard that in some areas lack of access to land and homes can be a source of tension.
Have you encountered a similar situation or other sources of tension in this commune?

WIT IN CONTEXT:

Types of exterior assistance to women:

- Other donor programs addressing women's issues: activities and impact?
- INGOs which addressed women in area: activities and impact?
- Local Rwandan NGOs addressing women's issues: activities and impact?

Nature of WIT support: material and non-material?

Impact of WIT on your community?

Can a WIT-type program serve to reduce social tension? How?

Attachment G:

MINISTRY PERSONNEL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Origins of WIT: dialogue between USAID Mission/OTI and Ministry

Process of establishing relationship?

What worked?

What didn't?

Lessons learned from process?

Perceptions of WIT:

Strengths and weaknesses of WIT?

Contribution of WIT:

Economic empowerment?

Political empowerment?

Unity and tolerance; reconciliation ?

Sustainability of WIT assistance?

Areas of Concern?

Alternative approaches / Other models?

What should WIT become?

Other donor/INGO programs the Ministry works with:

Similarities?

Key differences?

Women's Communal Funds:

Activities and approaches: Differences between WIT and Ministry approach?

Relationship of WIT to WCF in future?

Lessons learned from WIT applied to WCFs?

Attachment H:

WIT STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you see as strengths of WIT? What does WIT do that others don't? [comparative advantage]
2. What relationship should WIT have with the women's committees and/or the Women's Communal Fund?
3. Who should be the target group? What are the implications of that choice? [To reach the most vulnerable? Or – a micro-credit organization to aid those capable of repayment?]
4. What should WIT be in the future?
An independent NGO?
Project under USAID
Other?
Advantages and disadvantages of each form?
5. What should be the future relationship with the Ministry? Why?